

THE WILSON BULLETIN

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EDITORIAL

SOME INTERESTING RESULTS have now been obtained by marking mammals. The Cleveland program of the Ecological Society contained a paper on "Territory in Mammal Life", by W. L. Strunk, of the University of Michigan. In the *Journal of Mammalogy* (August, 1931) we find a paper on the "Travels of *Peromyscus*", by O. J. Murie and Adolph Murie. These mice were trapped and marked by means of ear punches, then liberated at varying distances from the home station. Subsequent recaptures gave information as to range of travel. Mice liberated far from home found their way back. One mouse found its way home over a distance of one mile. The authors are inclined to explain this capacity for orientation by the "sense of direction" idea.

NEWSPAPERS in August carried a press report stating that Prof. A. Brazier Howell, of Johns Hopkins University, claims that the "grasshopper" irruption in the middle west "is a result of the government policy of extermination of rodents." The August number of the *Journal of Mammalogy* contains the full report of the Committee on Predatory Mammal Control of the American Society of Mammalogists. While couched in polite terms this report is an indictment of the Biological Survey. The report lays the blame for the crisis now confronting our wild life directly on the executive officers of the Survey. It is saddening to watch the deterioration of a scientific bureau of which in the past we have been duly proud. We have been watching in recent years for an output of the Survey which would correspond in some measure with the work of Merriam, Cooke, Beal, Judd, McAttee, and others.

In connection with the Survey's poisoning campaign we may call attention to an article by Dr. Jean M. Linsdale entitled "Facts concerning the use of thallium in California to poison rodents—its destructiveness to game birds, song birds, and other valuable wild life", which appeared in the *Condor* for May-June, 1931. The facts therein presented are astounding. The number of kinds of

animals killed in California is listed at sixty. Of these thirty-four are birds, native and domestic, including 3314 Mourning Doves, 713 Valley Quail, 67 Meadowlarks, etc. And, of course, these figures are for a limited area, and must be regarded as incomplete.

NEW ORLEANS is a city of somewhat less than half a million population, located on the Mississippi River 110 miles from the mouth. There are many features about this city to interest the visitor. First of all, perhaps, its historical background claims our attention; many old buildings and customs still remain to give one glimpses of American conditions as they were a hundred and fifty years ago.

New Orleans was founded in 1718 by a French-Canadian named Bienville. Therefore, it is now more than 200 years old. While destructive fires, in 1788 and 1794, destroyed many of the oldest buildings, there are still many which are more than 100 years old, and some considerably older. Most of these picturesque structures are located in the "old quarter", called the *Vieux Carre*. From the time of its beginning until 1764 New Orleans was under French dominion. From that year until 1803 was the Spanish era. In the latter year the city came under American control, although the French again held the keys of the city for twenty days between the Spanish and American régimes.

Many relics of these early years still exist to make New Orleans one of the most interesting and picturesque of American cities. A few miles below the city is the Chalmette Battlefield, where, in 1814, General Jackson defeated the British. A beautiful monument has been erected to commemorate the event. We started out to make a list of the many monuments and historie buildings which might be classified as among the city's sights; but the task was immediately found to be too great.

The visiting engineer will find much to interest him. Part of the city is about one foot below the water level of the Gulf of Mexico. A much greater part is below the high water level of the Mississippi River. For many years this condition made it impossible to have cellars under the houses, or to have wells of pure water: wooden cisterns provided a fresh water supply. The dead could not be buried under the ground. An adequate sewage system was impossible. The Mississippi River overflowed its banks, causing destruction and disease. Now the city has protected itself with a system of levees, in comparison with which "the stone walls of the most famous mediaeval cities are toys". The total length of the "Great Wall of New Orleans" is said to be more than 100 miles, erected at a cost of \$11,000,000. The city has also an efficient drainage system operated by enormous pumps, which have a discharge capacity of seven billions of gallons daily. Opening the mouth of the Mississippi River for navigation, construction of passable land highways, including a five-mile concrete bridge across Lake Ponchartrain, into the city are other engineering problems which have been

solved. These constructions have cost a great deal of money. Besides the cost of the levees mentioned above, \$43,000,000 were spent for the drainage, sewerage, and water systems; \$160,000,000 for harbor facilities; and \$11,000,000 for making the wharves and buildings rat-proof to protect against the bubonic plague.

Within easy distance from New Orleans are the largest and most densely populated bird sanctuaries in the world. To describe these would make a long article. The article by Messrs. Bailey and Wright concluded in this issue is intended to give some idea of the bird life of this region.

Those who wish to make themselves familiar with the city before visiting it may secure descriptive pamphlets by writing to the New Orleans Association of Commerce. A splendidly illustrated article, with an excellent map of the state, will be found in the *National Geographic Magazine* for April, 1930.

All of these things make New Orleans an interesting city. The American Association for the Advancement of Science met in New Orleans once before, a quarter of a century ago, in 1905-1906; it is likely to be as long before a third meeting is held there. This is our opportunity. Times are hard, but life is short.

Beyond this, plans are being investigated by which our members may take a trip to Havana, Cuba, at much reduced cost immediately following the W. O. C. meeting. Details of this trip may be expected in the Secretary's letter of announcements for the meeting.